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SLAVE-HOLDING NEW ENGLAND AND ITS AWAKENING

COLONIAL PERIOD.

Negro slavery in New England was a peculiar admixture of servitude and bondage.¹ It typified, in the former sense, slavery as exemplified by the Hebrews among whom the bondman was considered a part of the master's household; that is, a member of his family, in accordance with the Mosaic Code which defined the relations between master and servant. As such the slave was looked upon as more than a mere beast of burden.² In the latter sense, however, New England slavery reflected that institution as it existed in the hey-day of the plantation era in the sugar, cotton, and tobacco States.³ There was the same horror of the slave trade, the same spectacle of gangs of manacled blacks deposited upon the wharves of Boston and Newport, and the same selling of human chattel at auction.⁴ Nor was the tearing of wife from husband, nor the separation of children from both, nor the existence of a slave code, peculiar only to the Middle and Southern Colonies. It was applicable to New England as well; and, in some instances, New England even led the way.⁵

The Puritan settlements of New England enjoyed, either contemporaneously or separately, the three forms of servitude common in that day, namely; indentured serv-

¹ See *Diary of Cotton Mather, Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 7th Series, VIII, 687; 4th Series, IV, 333.

² Body of Liberties of New England Confederation 1641 in *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 3rd Series, VIII, 231; See also George H. Moore, *Notes on Slavery in Massachusetts*, p. 3.

³ Sewall's *Letter Book; Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*. 5th Series, Vol. VI pp. 16-20.

⁴ "Just imported from Guinea a parcel of likely young Negro boys and girls."—*Boston News Letter*, Dec. 29, 1736.

⁵ New England was the first to legalize slavery. *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 3rd Series VIII, 231; Moore, *Notes on Slavery in Massachusetts*, p. 15.

ants, Indian slaves, and Negro slaves. Indentured servants date from the founding of Massachusetts; indeed they even preceded the settlement of the Puritans at Salem, having been sent in advance to prepare homes and food against the coming of the settlers in 1630. In the same year Winthrop was forced to liberate them because of the imminent danger of starvation and the unprofitableness of their labor.⁶ Unfree labor existed, however, throughout the remainder of the colonial period.⁷

The indentured servants soon proved insufficient in numbers to satisfy the colonists' increasing demand for laborers. A new source of supply was soon found, however, for Indian warfare began about 1636, and the captives were promptly sold into slavery. The women and children were usually employed in the colonies; the warriors were carried to the West Indies and there sold as slaves.⁸

The barbarous treatment of the Pequots by the New Englanders in their ruthless war of extermination against them, must ever remain a blot upon New England's escutcheon. Yet, it was the custom of the day, the age-old story of the unequal contest between the strong and the weak, and such was to be the common fate of the red man, until he was finally circumscribed within the bounds of reservations. However, the pious Puritans easily dismissed any qualms of conscience which might have arisen, by the simple fact that "a gracious Providence had been pleased to deliver the heathen Indians into their hands."⁹

Thus the redskin, and not the black man, was the first slave in New England. As such they were eagerly sought by the Puritans for their labor. Even the much vaunted saintliness of Roger Williams, was not sufficient to deter

⁶ Edward Channing, *History of the United States*, I, 331.

⁷ U. B. Phillips *American Negro Slavery*, p. 99.

⁸ "Mr. William Pierce of Mass. sent the males to Bermuda, and the women and children were distributed about the towns," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*. IV, iii, 360.

⁹ Moore, *Notes on Slavery in Mass.*, p. 2.

him from writing John Winthrop, Governor of Massachusetts Bay, asking that a small Indian boy be sent to him as a servant. He had just previously written Winthrop (1636), protesting against the cruel treatment of the Indians by the whites, and praying that "they be used kindly and have houses and fields given them."¹⁰ Then, startling in his inconsistency, he, again, wrote a little later to Winthrop: "It having pleased the most High to put into your hands another drove of Adam's degenerate seede. . . . I am bold (if I may not offend in it) to request the keeping and bringing up of one of the children. I have fixed mine eye on the little one with the red upon his neck, but I will not be peremptory in my choice, but will rest on your loving pleasure for him or any."¹¹ Indian slavery was, however, soon to be supplemented by Negro servitude, for the redskin was considered lazy, intractable, vindictive, and inclined to run away.

Just when the first Negroes were brought into New England cannot be ascertained with exactness. Mr. Palfrey states that Samuel Maverick had two slaves on Noodles Island before Winthrop arrived in Massachusetts in 1629.¹² But most authorities agree that the mention of Negro slaves by John Winthrop in his diary, in the year 1638 is the earliest authentic testimony of black slaves in New England. Winthrop writes: "Mr. Pierce in his Salem ship, *Desire*, has been at Providence (W.I.) and brought some cotton and tobacco and Negroes from there, and salt from Tertugos."¹³ Thomas Pemberton, in response to a friendly query propounded by Judge Tucker of Virginia in 1795, asserted that one Samuel Maverick "owned upwards of thirty slaves."¹⁴ This, however, must have been later than 1638, the date of Winthrop's notation in his diary, for such a general condi-

¹⁰ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, IV, Vol. 6, p. 195-6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 195-196.

¹² Palfrey, *History of New England*, II, p. 30, note.

¹³ Winthrop's *Journal* 1, p. 125.

¹⁴ *Belknap Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, V, iii, p. 380.

tion would have robbed Winthrop's statement of its importance. Dr. Eliot, in answering the same questionnaire, said he did not know when slavery was introduced into Massachusetts.¹⁵

Uncertain as are the beginnings of slavery in Massachusetts, they are even more obscure for Connecticut and the other colonies.¹⁶ The first mention of a Negro slave in Connecticut is the reference to one Louis Berbice from Dutch Guiana, who was killed by his master, Gysbert Opdyck, commissary at the Dutch fort at Hartford.¹⁷ There were Negro slaves in New Haven as early as 1644, six years after the founding of the colony.¹⁸ It is known that John Pantry of Hartford owned a slave in 1653.¹⁹ In New Hampshire, no mention is made of slaves until the General Court of that province, in 1646, ordered the return of a Negro slave to Guinea, who had been unjustly purloined from that place by one Mr. William Piscataqua.²⁰ The above would tend to indicate, that, prior to that date, legally acquired slaves must have been in the colony. It also throws into a ridiculous light the nice distinctions of the Puritans of that day, between the lawfully buying of, and the stealing of human beings, which latter was considered by them a crime according to the Mosaic Law in force in New England.²¹ In Rhode Island, the first reference to slavery is a law limiting involuntary servitude to ten years. This was in 1652.²²

The growth of Negro slavery in New England was slow during the seventeenth century. In 1680, there were only 30 slaves in Connecticut, two of whom had been christened.²³

¹⁵ *Belknap Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, V, iii, p. 380.

¹⁶ U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, p. 99.

¹⁷ Steiner, *History, etc.*, p. 23, note.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*,

¹⁹ Steiner, *ut supra.*, p. 12.

²⁰ *New Hampshire Historical Society Collection*, I p. 229.

²¹ See Exodus XXI, 16.

²² *Rhode Island Coll. Rec.* I, p. 248.

²³ *Conn. Col. Rec.*, III. p. 298.

In 1676, Massachusetts had 200 slaves; in 1680, the number could not have greatly exceeded that total, for Governor Bradstreet reported that for fifty years no slaves had been brought into the colony.²⁴ In 1700, Governor Dudley placed the number at 550, four hundred of whom were in Boston. The slow increase of slaves was due, perhaps, to several causes, the rigor of the climate, and the general barrenness of the soil, each militating against slave labor. The situation was due also to the penuriousness of the settlers. In 1730, New Hampshire boasted of but thirty slaves.²⁵

The Eighteenth Century, however, saw the rise of the New England colonies as the greatest slave-carriers of America.²⁶ Quick to see the unprofitableness of the Negro slave as a laborer in such an environment, when the price of the slave was greater than the labor returned, the ingenious Yankee soon found a market in the West Indies for slaves, exchanged for rum, sugar and molasses on the Guinea Coast.²⁷ Massachusetts early assumed a commanding position in this trade. The ports of Boston and Salem prospered especially. Their merchants carried on a "brisk trade to Guinea" for many years, marketing most of their slaves in the West Indies.²⁸ Peter Faneuil, whose "whole lineage is held in peculiar honor" in Boston, was typical of the many possessors of comfortable fortunes amassed from the profits of this traffic.²⁹ The name *Jolly Bachelor*, which was carried by one of his ships engaged in the slave trade, typifies the spirit of the time in regard to this profitable business.³⁰ As opulence increased, the number of slaves grew proportionately.³¹ In 1735, there were 2,600 Negroes

²⁴ *American Statistical Association, I, Appendix* 506; also Moore, *Notes* p. 49, Steiner p. 23 (note).

²⁵ *New Hampshire Historical Collection, I, 299.*

²⁶ Moore, *Notes*, 50.

²⁷ U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 102.

²⁸ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection, 5 Series, iii, 380.*

²⁹ Weeden, *Economic and Social History of New England*, ii, 466.

³⁰ Channing, *History of United States*, II, 513.

³¹ Moore, *Notes on Slavery*, 50-1.

in Massachusetts; in 1764 the number had increased to 5,779.³² In 1742, Boston alone had 1,514 slaves and free Negroes, the number having almost quadrupled in about forty years.

There were few slaves in Rhode Island in the Seventeenth Century. Concerning the slave trade there, Governor Cranston in reply to certain "Heads of Inquiry" from the British Board of Trade in 1702, asserted that no slaves had been imported from Africa up to the 24th of June, 1696.³³ He was careful to limit the date, however, for a little later, the brigantine *Sunflower* arrived at Newport with forty-five slaves. Most of them were sold there at thirty to thirty-five pounds a head; the rest were taken to Boston for disposal.³⁴

Subsequently, however, the slave trade of Rhode Island outstripped that of Massachusetts. Governor Wood, early in the Eighteenth Century, reported that the colony had one hundred and twenty vessels employed in the trade. Newport rivalled Boston as New England's premier seaport. It had twenty or thirty stills going full blast to supply rum for the African trade.³⁵ Ironically enough, so great was the demand for rum upon the Coast, that there was hardly enough left for home consumption, with the result that many good Rhode Islanders were forced to get along with their spirits.³⁶ About eighteen hundred hogsheads of rum were consumed annually in the slave trade.³⁷ And there sprang up as a result of the gains from this profitable commerce in human merchandise, an opulent and aristocratic society in Newport. Colonel Thomas Hazard of Narragansett and Mr. Downs of Bristol, were names that loomed large in the commercial and social registers of

³² Moore, *Notes on Slavery*, 50-1.

³³ *R. I. Col. Rec.*, IV, p. 53.

³⁴ *R. I. Col. Rec.*, IV, p. 53; Bucknell, *History of R. I.* II, 497.

³⁵ DuBois, *Suppression of the Slave Trade*, 28.

³⁶ Bucknell, *ut supra*, p. 504.

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

that day. Their fortunes were accumulated from the slave trade.

Even New Hampshire and Connecticut sent ships to Africa. The latter also exported wheat, staves, and horses to the West Indies in exchange for slaves, and sold most of them to other colonies.³⁸ However, the trade of neither New Hampshire nor Connecticut was comparable with that of Rhode Island or that of Massachusetts. It was so negligible in New Hampshire, that in response to a query from the Board of Trade concerning an impost on slaves and felons imported into the colony, the committee of the General Court responded: "There was never any duties laid on either by this Government, and so few brought in that it would not be worth the public's notice so as to make an act concerning them."³⁹

The astounding increase in the New England Slave trade during the Eighteenth Century may be ascribed to three causes. First, the breaking of the monopoly upon the trade held by the Royal African Company by Parliament in 1698 and the opening of this commerce to private competition;⁴⁰ secondly, the Asiento of 1713, which gave England the monopoly of supplying four thousand eight hundred slaves annually to Spanish American, and thirdly, the unprofitableness of slaves and the unadaptability of the thin New England soil to extensive agriculture, which compelled the New Englanders to look for fortune upon the sea.⁴¹ And what was more lucrative than the slave trade? About half the tonnage of New England shipping was soon engaged in the slave trade, despite the great fishing interests, without which the colonists later claimed they could not exist.⁴²

Anti-slavery New Englanders in the Nineteenth Century were shocked at the spectacle of Negroes, sold like cattle

³⁸ Dubois, *Suppression of the Slave Trade*, p. 28.

³⁹ *New Hampshire Historical Society Collection*, IV, p. 617.

⁴⁰ Weeden, *ut supra*, p. 454.

⁴¹ Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, p. 103.

⁴² See *Massachusetts Statement of Trade and Fisheries*, *Connecticut Historical Society Collection*, Vol., XVIII, p. 280 et seq.

on the auction block in the South. But the same spectacle had occurred in New England.⁴³ The newspapers of that day quoted Negro men, women and children indiscriminately along with wearing apparel and other goods.⁴⁴ Children were torn from their mothers and sold. Advertisements like the following were common. "For sale: Very good Jamaica Rum with a young Negro that has had small-pox."⁴⁵ Another ran: "Likely Negro, men, women and children just arrived."⁴⁶ And still another: "A likely Negro woman, 19 years and a child of 6 months to be sold together or apart."⁴⁷ The price of an adult slave varied from thirty to sixty pounds.⁴⁸

PURITAN SANCTIONS FOR SLAVERY

How did the New England conscience react toward the enslavement of the Negro and the Indian? Slavery is so contrary to natural liberty that both ancients and moderns have always promulgated reasons in defense of its existence among them. Dr. Maine asserts that the foundation of slavery is the "simple wish to see the bodily powers of another person as a means of ministering to his own ease or pleasure, and this desire is as old as human nature." To satisfy the conscience of the master, the Greeks established the idea of the intellectual superiority of certain races, and consequently natural aptitude for the servile condition in others. The Romans declared the doctrine of a supposed agreement between victor and vanquished, in which time first stipulated for the perpetual services of his foe, and the other gained, in consideration, the life which he had

⁴³ Phyllis Wheatley, famous Negro Poetess of Boston was bought from the auction block in Boston in 1761—Nell, *Colored Patriots of the Revolution*, p. 64.

⁴⁴ Weeden, *Economic and Social History of New England*, Vol. II, p. 454; Moore, Notes.

⁴⁵ *Boston News Letter*. No. 1402.

⁴⁶ *N. E. Journal*, No. 200.

⁴⁷ *Boston News Letter*. May 1st, 1732.

⁴⁸ Weeden, *Economic History of New England*, Vol. II, p. 456.

legally forfeited."⁴⁹ But the Puritans based their right to human chattel upon the highest spiritual grounds. God had given the heathen Indians and the Negroes to them as part of their inheritance.⁵⁰ Were not the Puritans, even as the Israelites, God's chosen people? Slavery was a sacred privilege the Almighty was pleased to grant His Elect, and they quoted extensively from the Bible in support of their position. The spiritual eye of the Calvinistic New Englanders, says a critic in substance, was not sufficiently penetrating at that time to perceive that the God of Heaven respected neither person nor color.⁵¹

Some New England historians would have us believe that the Puritans abhorred slavery.⁵² They based this supposed anti-slavery feeling upon the return by Massachusetts, of two Negroes stolen from Africa and brought to the colony in 1645.⁵³ There was not a trace of anti-slavery sentiment in this action. It was done solely because of the Puritans' due regard for the Biblical prohibition of man-stealing.⁵⁴ The Puritanic law, based upon the Old Testament, had made manstealing a capital crime,⁵⁵ and the Puritan conscience revolted against this unjust method of securing property.⁵⁶

It was not until the colonial resistance to the oppression of Great Britain was far advanced, when the realization of their inconsistency of pleading for self liberty, while denying it to others, gradually awakened a change in public opinion regarding slavery.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Maine, *Ancient Law*, p. 162-166, Moore, *Notes*, p. 163.

⁵⁰ Roger Williams to John Winthrop, *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 4th Vol. VI, p. 195-6.

⁵¹ Moore, *Notes on Slavery*, p. 71.

⁵² Bradford, *History of Massachusetts*, p. 51.

⁵³ Moore, *Notes*, p. 29.

⁵⁴ Hart, *Abolition and Slavery*, p. 51.

⁵⁵ Exodus, XXI, 16. This law placed 10th among the Capital Laws of Conn. on Dec. 1, 1642. (Steiner *ut supra*, p. 11)

⁵⁶ Locke, *Anti-slavery in America*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Locke, *Anti-slavery in America*, p. 13.

Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven, members of the New England Confederation, gave slavery a legal sanction in the instrument of government drawn up in 1643. The provision read: "There shall never be any kind of slavery, villinage, nor captivitie amongst us, unless it be captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us, and these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the Law of God, established in Israel concerning such persons doth morally require."⁵⁸

This law passed as one of the articles of the New England Confederation, in 1643, evidently shatters the arguments of apologetic historians of New England, whose brief is that slavery was never legally recognized there.⁵⁹ Moreover, this law is the earliest enactment passed in America, bestowing legal sanction upon slavery.⁶⁰ As such it has been violently assailed.⁶¹ On the other hand it has also been eulogized by others⁶² as evincing an early abhorrence for slavery on the part of the Puritans. The medium between the hostile attitude of its most outspoken critic and its most eloquent eulogist is found perhaps in the statement of Mary S. Locke, who while admitting that the act was "the first legalizing slavery," believes that "its evident intention was to limit that which already existed; not to create or establish the institution."⁶³

The Puritans, like the southern colonists, also gave slavery an economic sanction. Many considered slaves absolutely essential to the well-being of the colonies. A contemporaneous writer frowned upon the indentured servants as laborers because they "were too desirous of free-

⁵⁸ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 3rd Series, Vol. VIII, p. 231.

⁵⁹ Palfrey, *History of New England*, ii, p. 30. Footnote.

⁶⁰ Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America*, p. 14; Moore, *Notes*, p. 15-16.

⁶¹ Moore, *Notes*, p. 16.

⁶² Washburn, *Extinction of Slavery in Massachusetts*. *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 4th series IV, 334, 335.

⁶³ Locke, *Anti-slavery in America*, p. 14.

dom to plant for themselves, and would not work but for great wages."⁶⁴ The same writer contended that "twenty Moores [Negroes] could be mayntayned cheaper than one English servant."⁶⁵ Judge Sewall, Richard Baxter, Nathaniel Appelton, and others labored during the colonial period to explode this theory, but the economic imbecility of slavery was not to be thoroughly demonstrated until more than a century later.⁶⁶

Slavery in New England was a failure as a business proposition. In the South, the mild climate, fertile soil, and the plantation system, rendered the employment of large numbers of slaves profitable. But in the New England colonies, climatic conditions, the barrenness of the soil, the town system, and the general poverty of the inhabitants, all militated against slavery. Slaves were more of a nuisance than a benefit, even in the Narragansett Country where Negroes were most numerous.⁶⁷ So cheaply were slaves considered in New England that at birth, Negro babies were given away like puppies;⁶⁸ and sometimes a cash consideration accompanied the offer as an added inducement. Because of the unemployment obtaining advertisements offering to hire out or sell slaves—male and female—were common.⁶⁹ Slavery was to disappear in New England not because of any exalted moral objection to the holding of human beings as chattel, but because it did not pay.⁷⁰ It is safe to assume then, that had physical conditions been as favorable to slavery in the North as in the South, the sentiments of both sections would undoubtedly have been

⁶⁴ Phillips, *ut supra*, p. 101.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 198.

⁶⁶ Hepfer, *Impending Crisis of the South*.

⁶⁷ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 5th series, iii, p. 390. *Richman Rhode Island*, p. 123.

⁶⁸ A Negro child soon expected, of good breed, may be owned by any person inclining to take it away and money with it. *Continental Journal*, Dec. 21, 1780.

⁶⁹ "To be sold: a likely Negro girl, 16 yrs. of age, for no fault, but want of employ." *Connecticut Journal*, Nov. 25, 1779, Moore, *Notes*, p. 207.

⁷⁰ U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, p. 101.

identical. The very nature of the environment prohibited the keeping of slaves in large numbers. Thus, the average number of slaves for each household was two, although a few families owned from five to thirty; but this proved the exception rather than the rule, and obtained only in the Narragansett Country.

STATUS OF THE SLAVE

In keeping with the Hebrew conception of bondage, slaves in New England were usually considered as members of the master's household and, therefore, as part of the family. This relationship is excellently portrayed by Cotton Mather.⁷¹ They were employed chiefly as house servants. It has even been claimed that the only difference in New England between the slave and the indentured servant lay in the fact that the slave was a servant for life, whereas the latter served only for a definite period. Contemporary fugitive slave advertisements seem to indicate that the Negroes were fairly well clothed.⁷² Some men were taught trades, others did a little farming, but they were occupied chiefly as house servants; though in the Narragansett community, many of the female slaves served as dairymaids.⁷³ Advertisements show that some of the women

"I will remember that they are in some sense my children, and by taking care that they may want nothing which may be good for them and so far as the methods of instituting piety into the mind which I use with my children may be properly and prudently used with my servants, they shall be partakers in them. Nor will I leave them ignorant of anything wherein I may instruct them to be useful to other generations. . . . He [the master] shall give the slaves Bibles"—Sermon to masters and servants. *History of Narragansett Church*. Woodson, "Education of Negro to 1861"—appendix.

⁷² "Ran away from his master, Samuel Lynds, of Boston, the 26th of Feb. last, a Negro man aged about 20 years, short stature, bandy leg'd, having on light colored gray coat, a leather jacket and breeches, a pair of yarn stockings. He speaks good English. Whosoever shall apprehend and take up the said Negro and deliver him to his said master, or give any time intelligence of him so his master may have him again," etc., etc., . . . *Boston News Letter*, Mar. 17, 1707, p. 453.

⁷³ Updike, *History of Narragansett Church*, p. 174.

were skilled in sewing, spinning and other occupations open to their sex.⁷⁴

Proper social relations among the slaves were encouraged. Marriages of slaves in New England were duly solemnized, recorded and respected in so far as was consistent with the morals of the institution.⁷⁵ Although some masters did connive at irregular social relationship of their slaves, the extreme abhorrence with which the Puritans looked upon adultery would never allow them ordinarily to deny the sacrament of marriage to their slaves. Permission for such a union however was often denied by the master who was unwilling to lose the services of a valuable slave.⁷⁶ A supplementary law passed in 1703, however, provided against the unreasonable denial of marriage to Negroes with those of their race on the part of the master.⁷⁷ In addition, the pious regard in which the Puritans held the nuptial tie was normally sufficient deterrent against the separation of husband and wife. Free Negroes who desired slave women as wives were usually allowed to purchase their freedom.⁷⁸

Miscegenation, culminating in a rapid increase of mulattoes, early caused concern in New England.⁷⁹ According to contemporary evidence, the mating usually took place between white women and Negro men.⁸⁰ In order that their offspring might be freemen, Negro slaves freely mated

⁷⁴ "To be sold: a likely Negro Wench, 12 or 13 years of age; has had Small Pox; can wash, iron, card, spin" . . . etc., etc., *Independent Chronicle*, Nov. 28, 1776; Moore, *Notes*, p. 178.

⁷⁵ "Duke James Bailey's Negro and Daphne, Col. Barker's Negro, were married Dec. 25, 1741"—Barry's Hanover—175; Moore *Notes*, 94.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁷⁷ This law was first passed by Massachusetts and subsequently by other colonies of New England.

⁷⁸ A bill of sale of a Negro Woman Servant in Boston in 1724, recites that "Whereas Scipio of Boston aforesaid, Free Negro Man and Laborer purposes marriage to Margaret, the Negro Woman Servant of the said Dorcas Marshall . . . that the said intended marriage may take effect and that the said Scipio may enjoy the said Margaret without any interruption," etc., she is duly sold, with her apparel for Fifty Pounds. Moore, *Notes*, p. 57.

⁷⁹ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 5 series, Vol. iii, p. 380.

⁸⁰ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 5 series, Vol. iii, p. 380.

with Indian women. The Indians were free and the children of all free women were declared such from birth, the offspring following the status of the mother.⁸¹

Although no general effort was made to educate the slaves, many of them were taught to read and write. Others achieved distinction in writing of poetry, drawing up of petitions, and even as song writers. Phyllis Wheatley about 1770 amazed and charmed Boston by her beautiful poetry. Prince Hall and Felix Halbrook, free Negroes of the same city, drew up several petitions memorializing the legislature to abolish slavery in Massachusetts.⁸² Richman tells of an anonymous Negro in Rhode Island who excelled in the writing of both poetry and music.⁸³ No law has been found forbidding the instruction of slaves in New England as in the case of the South, but no special effort was made to educate them until the Eighteenth Century.⁸⁴

CONVERSION OF THE SLAVES

The expediency of Christianizing the slaves evoked prolonged and acrimonious discussion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. So long as the Negroes remained heathen the New Englanders, like the other colonies, felt justified by the Mosiac Code in retaining them in bondage. But the custom of the day then obtaining throughout Christendom was that conversion to Christianity rendered the subject unfit for slavery, and no religious sanction existed for the enslavement of Christians by Christians.⁸⁵ For this reason Dean Berkeley opposed baptism on the ground that it was incompatible with slavery. Furthermore, he held that slaves were "Creatures of another species who had no right to be included in or admitted to the sacrament."⁸⁶ The masters, especially in the South, feared the economic consequences of converting their slaves.

⁸¹ Hurd, *Law of Freedom and Bondage*, Vol. I.

⁸² Mott, "*Biographies and Sketches*," p. 39-46.

⁸³ Richman, *History of Rhode Island*.

⁸⁴ Urdike, *History of the Narragansett Church*, p. 476.

⁸⁵ *American Historical Review*, XXI No. 13, p. 505.

⁸⁶ Moore, *Notes*, p. 79.

Manumission as a result would entail large property losses. In addition they entertained grave apprehensions lest the religious equality of the slave with the master provoke a desire in the bondmen for social equality and freedom, thus rendering him less tractable and thereby diminishing his value as a slave.⁸⁷

In order to secure the master in his property and prevent the slaves from pleading the unwritten law, thus securing their freedom upon baptism, the Bishop of London decreed it inoperative in 1725. He held that Christianity conferred upon the slave not a personal freedom, but a spiritual emancipation from sin and Satan.⁸⁸ The plantation States, however, had passed sundry laws which prevented conversion from working manumission. Maryland led the way in this respect in 1664, Virginia followed in 1667, and North Carolina, South Carolina, New York and New Jersey, enacted similar measures by 1702.⁸⁹

The English Church, concerned over the Christianizing of the Negroes, furthered the work in America, especially in Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas, through an organization called the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Foremost among the men who labored in this work were the Dr. Bray and his associates. His coworkers were interested in the religious instruction of whites as well as the slaves. Under their direction several schools were opened in Newport, New York and Williamsburgh, Virginia, in 1760, and in Philadelphia in 1758, where instruction was given until the outbreak of the Revolution.⁹⁰ Mr. Updike gives an account of such schools in Rhode Island where both white and black children were instructed.

⁸⁷ *American Historical Review*, XXI, p. 505.

⁸⁸ "Christianity does not make the least alteration in Civil Property. . . . The freedom which Christianity gives is a freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan and from the dominion of those Lusts and Passions and inordinate Desires, but as to their natural condition they remain as before, even after baptism."—Bishop of London, cited *American Historical Review*, XXI, 511.

⁸⁹ Updike, *History of the Narragansett Church*, p. 476.

⁹⁰ *American Historical Review*, XXI, 505.

These pious men labored earnestly, but for several reasons little could be accomplished. There was a fear of slave insurrections, which caused some objections to religious instruction. The slaves too, were generally ignorant. At best therefore, a few slaves received the form but not the substance of Christianity.⁹¹

Certain high-souled men of New England, however, labored zealously to effect conversion of the slaves. John Elliot, the friend of the lowly, pleaded with the masters to send their slaves to him at least once a week for instruction.⁹² The pious Judge Sewall, who labored to prevent the "Rating of Indians and Negroes with hogs and horses," toiled unceasingly for the Christianization as well as the freedom of the slaves.⁹³ Cotton Mather, who published a set of rules for "Master and Servant," was deeply grieved because "the slaves were treated as domestic animals and that so little care was taken of their precious and immortal souls which . . . were left to a destroying ignorance merely for fear of thereby losing the benefit of their Vassalage."⁹⁴ He branded the contention of the masters that conversion would destroy the value of their slaves as laborers as a "Cursed Falsehood." "Experience," said he, "confutes it; it is a Blasphemy and it is fitter for the mouth of a Devil than of a Christian to utter it."⁹⁵ He admonished the slaves to "beware of the sins which may provoke the glorious one to leave them unto the Last Degree of Wickedness and misery; to be patient in their Low and Hard condition and to become Servants of Christ."⁹⁶

In order to facilitate the conversion of the slaves an association of ministers memorialized the General Court of Massachusetts in 1694, asking for the passage of a law

⁹¹ Updike, *History of the Narragansett Church*, 177.

⁹² *American Historical Review*, XXI, p. 510.

⁹³ Sewall's Essay of 1706, Moore, *Notes*, p. 95.

⁹⁴ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 7th Series VIII, 687.

⁹⁵ Cotton Mather to Thomas Prince, June 15, 1723, *Diary of Cotton Mather. Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 7th Series VIII, 2. 687.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 688.

which would provide that baptism did not carry with it manumission since on this account, many masters denied this privilege to their slaves. The petition was not granted.⁹⁷ A query was prepounded to the General Court of Connecticut in 1738 whether infant slaves might be "Baptized in their Master's Right, provided they suitably promise and engage to bring them up in the waye of Religion."⁹⁸ It was also inquired whether it was the duty of the master to do this. The court responded affirmatively to both queries.⁹⁹

A peculiar aspect of baptism and attendant church membership in New England was the political privileges associated with it. Church membership in the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries in New England conferred upon the male the status of a freeman, that is, the right to vote and to hold office.¹⁰⁰ Did the slave, then, when baptized automatically become a member of the body politic? Bancroft, in his *History of the United States*, replies in the affirmative.¹⁰¹ Mr. Quincy states that "slaves were admitted into the church when members had peculiar political privileges."¹⁰²

However, there appears no evidence to prove that the General Court ever considered the slave a member of the Company, even though he were a communicant. To do so would have been tantamount to a writ of emancipation. Again, if such political privileges were accorded the slave, though he still remained a bondman, an anomalous situa-

⁹⁷ *Acts and Resolutions of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, American Historical Review*, XXI, 514.

⁹⁸ *Records of the Association of the Colony of Connecticut*, 1738, p. 6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ "To the end (that) the body of freemen may be preserved of honest and good men: It is ordered that henceforth no man shall be admitted to the freedom of this Commonwealth but such as are members of some of the churches within the limits of this jurisdiction."—*Ancient Charters*, 117 in *Moore's Notes*, p. 95; footnotes.

¹⁰¹ "The servant, the bondsman might be a member of the church and therefore a freeman of the Company," Bancroft's *History of U.S.*, I, 360.

¹⁰² *Moore's Notes*, p. 94.

tion would result, for in the case of a non-communicating master, the owner would be compelled to obey laws enacted in part by his slave.¹⁰³ It is safe to presume, then, that no such condition obtained, neither did church membership confer the franchise upon the slaves. As late as 1780 free Negroes in Massachusetts complained that "while we are not allowed the privilege of freemen of the State, having no vote or influence in the election . . . we most humbly request, therefore, that you take our unhappy case into your serious consideration, and in your wisdom and power grant us relief from taxation while under our present depressed circumstances."¹⁰⁴

The first baptism in New England probably occurred in Massachusetts and was of sufficient importance to justify mention in John Winthrop's diary. He writes, "A Negro maid belonging to Mr. Stoughton of Dorchester, Massachusetts, who being well affirmed by divers years experience for sound knowledge and true godliness was received into the church and baptized."¹⁰⁵ During the Eighteenth Century, however, slaves were generally admitted into the church through baptism. Cotton Mather rejoiced in 1710 over having baptized two Negro slaves, James and Ruth.¹⁰⁶ Ministers distributed circulars among the slave owners, beseeching them to permit their bondmen to be instructed in religion and morals.¹⁰⁷ Marmaduke Brown was pleased to write in 1753 that, in the current year, he had baptized 43 infants, two whites and one black adult. His congregation consisted of 153 persons, seven of whom were blacks and who behaved in a manner "truly exemplary and praise-

¹⁰³ *Palfrey History of New England*, II, p. 30, footnote.

¹⁰⁴ *Petition of Negroes and Mulattoes of Dartmouth*, Feb. 1780, Moore's *Notes*, p. 197-198.

¹⁰⁵ Winthrop's *Diary*, II, p. 26.

¹⁰⁶ "I could make it an occasion to glorify the great Saviour of all men in several instances especially in such admonitions to that black part of the flock as may be needful for them."—*Diary of Cotton Mather, Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 7th Series VIII, Part II, p. 43.

¹⁰⁷ Updike, *History of Narragansett Church*, p. 479.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* Updike, *History of Narragansett Church*, p. 475.

worthy.'"¹⁰⁸ The Reverend James McSparran of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel catechised both Negroes and whites in Rhode Island.¹⁰⁹ The Negroes usually had a section allotted to them in the churches. It was generally in the gallery; and in Torrington, Connecticut, the galleries were boarded up, neither permitting the occupants to see, nor to be seen. A special corner in the graveyards was also reserved for the slaves and free Negroes.¹¹⁰

THE TREATMENT OF THE SLAVE

The treatment of the slaves in New England, except in cases of crime, was generally kinder than in the plantation colonies. The master was usually granted the same rights over his slave as was bestowed upon the head of a family by the Hebraic Law. He did not have the power of life or death over his slave.¹¹¹ If he killed his bondsman he was subject to the same penalty as if he had killed a free-man. If he maimed his slave, or struck out an eye or tooth, the slave would be set free.¹¹² The slaves had recourse to the courts and not only were permitted to offer testimony against their masters but could also bring action against him for beating or wounding.¹¹³ There appears an instance of the trial of one Samuel Smith of Sandwich, Massachusetts, in 1719, for the murder of his slave, but the records do not show that he paid the death penalty for the offense.¹¹⁴ Slaves could own property, despite the law which forbade their trading and trafficking.¹¹⁵ On the whole, the slaves seemed to have been regarded as part of the family. The brutal punishment to which the plantation Negroes were subjected was very infrequent in New England. Slaves

¹⁰⁸ *Diary of James McSparran*, p. XXI, 52, Channing's *History of United States*, II, 386.

¹¹⁰ Steiner, *History of Slavery in Connecticut*, p. 20.

¹¹¹ See Judge Reeve's *Review of Slavery*, in Steiner's *History*, p. 17.

¹¹² Steiner's *History*, p. 12.

¹¹³ Moore, *Notes on Slavery*, p. 99.

¹¹⁴ See Jennison Case in Massachusetts in 1783. The master was fined for beating slave and latter was set free. *Belknap Papers*, 5th Series, Vol. III, p. 403.

¹¹⁵ Moore, *Notes on Slavery*, p. 98.

were whipped, however, for mention is made of a master who died from lock-jaw, contracted from a bite on the thumb while chastising his slave.¹¹⁶ Slaves were legally put to death either by fire or by hanging in expiation of the crimes of arson or murder. Two Negroes were burned at stake for arson in Massachusetts in 1681.¹¹⁷ Another, for a similar crime was burned to death in Boston in 1723. He had attempted to set fire to the house of one Mr. Purcell. Cotton Mather, who lived in deathly fear of a slave insurrection, believed that it was the prelude to a general plot of the slaves to lay the entire town in ashes. He advocated, therefore, that the masters look well to the condition of their slaves. The punishments were not peculiar to Negroes, however, but applied to whites as well, for the Mosaic Code which formed the basis of the Puritan's political as well as religious creed, demanded "A life for a life and a burning for a burning."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Steiner, *Narragansett Planters*, p. 19.

¹¹⁷ Moore, *Notes on Slavery*, p. 183.

¹¹⁸ "This Place has lately been brought into uncommon Distress by some of a very foolish Nation. The Voice of the Lord Cries to the City. First the Burning of the Town has been threatened, and there have been many fires kindled in which some of which those of this Foolish Nation we may suppose have not been concerned. While the Decree is yett not Executed (and we have been so marvellously remarkably undeservedly preserved) and God calls us . . . not only to thankfulness for our praeservation . . . the Hour of the Calamity of it should it proceed makes the Call to this very Powerful. But also to consider what we have to do that such a Desolation by those (or by some other) hands may be prevented. Contention Burning for Burning was required by the Word of the glorious God Fullfilled by His Hand.

And considering by what Hands the Town has become so Endangered there can be nothing more reasonable than for us to consider whether our conduct with relation to our African slaves be not one thing for which our God may have a Controversy with us. Are they always treated according to the Rules of Humanity? Are they treated as those that are of one Blood with us, and those that have Immortal Souls in them and are not mere Beasts of Burden? Are they Instructed and made to know such things which if they knew would restrain them from Exorbitancies and Enormities which are complained against them and render them notable Blessings in the Families they Belong Unto."—Cotton Mather to Thomas Prince, June 16, 1723. *Diary of Cotton Mather; Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, 7th Series, VII, p. 687-688.

But despite the relatively mild treatment of the slaves, the yoke of bondage proved irksome to many of them, and the newspapers of the day frequently advertised runaway slaves. One notice read, "Negro woman ran away with two year old son."¹¹⁹ Another, "Ran away from Abraham Davenport in Stamford, Conn., the fourth of June a Mulatto Man Slave named Vanhall, aged 31 years. . . . Whoever takes up and secures said Mulatto, so that his Master may have him again, shall receive £5. Reward and reasonable charges paid."¹²⁰ Some of these fugitives, after being captured, sued for their freedom in the courts and obtained it.¹²¹

Attempts were made by some masters to improve the breed of their slaves. The most notable case is that of Mr. Maverisk of Noodles Island, who having a female slave of fine physical proportions, attempted by force to mate her with one of his males whom she looked upon with disdain and loathing since she had been a queen in her country.¹²² An instance is also cited of the vilest of all

¹¹⁹ Steiner, *History of Slavery in Connecticut*.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹²¹ In the case of *Abda vs. Richards* in Connecticut, May, 1704, a Negro claimed that he was a free man, basing his claim upon his white blood. He was a mulatto. The court declared him a slave and returned him to his master.—*Connecticut Colonial Records*, IV, p. 478. This case proved offspring of slave mother was slave.

¹²² "The Second of October (1639) about 9 of the clock in the morning, Mr. Maverick's Negro woman came to my chamber window, and in her own Country language and tune sang very loud and shrill, Going our to her, she used a great deal of respect towards me, and willingly would have expressed her grief in English; but I apprehended it by her countenance and deportment, whereupon I repaired to my host, to learn of him the cause, and resolved to treat him in her behalf, for that I understood before, that she had been a Queen in her own Country, and observed a very humble and dutiful garb used towards her by another Negro who was her maid. Mr. Maverick was desirous to have a breed of Negroes, and therefore seeing she would not yield by persuasions to company with a Negro young man he had in his house; he commanded him (whether she wished or not) to go to bed (with) her, which was no sooner done (than) she kicked him out again. This she took in high disdain beyond her slavery, and this was the cause of her grief."—Josselyn's *Account of Two Voyages to New England*. Cited Moore, p. 8.

the aspects of slavery—the breeding of slaves for the market. The historian of Hanover, Massachusetts, with evident loathing, writes that “Mr. T—— raised slaves for the market.”¹²³

In only one section of New England, however, did slavery flourish, and that was in the Narragansett section of Rhode Island. There in the Southern section of this colony was a fertile region, covered with luxuriant grass, and well adapted for grazing. It became the dairy community of New England. Salt bogs or lagoons separated the fields, making fences unnecessary. On farms ranging from 600 to over 1,000 acres dwelt a small, landed aristocracy differing from any other to be found in New England. Horses and sheep were raised in large numbers. In 1730, South Kingstown was the richest city of Rhode Island. It contained a population of 965 whites, 333 Negroes, and 223 Indians.¹²⁴ Eighteen years later this proportion was nearly the same; 1,405 whites, 380 Negroes, and 193 Indians. The ratio of slaves to whites was greater than anywhere else in New England. Perhaps this fact explains the severity of Rhode Island’s slave code, which will be discussed later. Some of the planters held from five to forty-five slaves a piece.¹²⁵ In short, in Rhode Island dwelt a community of planters, whose wealth was extracted from the soil, and who represented, on a miniature scale, the aristocratic planters of the South.¹²⁶

The large increase of Negro slavery during the Eighteenth Century, evoked harsher methods of regulating the actions of slaves in the New England colonies.¹²⁷ In the Seventeenth Century, slave legislation had been very slight, due in part to their paucity of numbers.

¹²³ Barry’s *Hanover*, p. 175.

¹²⁴ Channing, *Narragansett Planters*, pp. 5-12.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²⁷ Steiner, *History of Slavery in Connecticut*, p. 14, see *Body of Liberties*, *ut supra* p. 231. *Belknap Papers*, *ut supra*, p. 333.

SLAVE CODES

Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and the Colonies of New Haven and Connecticut in 1641 had already legally sanctioned the existence of slavery.¹²⁸ Later, by dropping the word "strangers" from the law of 1641, in the revised legislation of 1670, Massachusetts made it possible for the children of slaves to be held in bondage. This act took precedence over any similar enactment by either Virginia, Maryland, or North Carolina.¹²⁹ And yet it has been argued that slavery crept in without legal sanction in Massachusetts. Palfrey claims that no person was ever legally born into slavery in Massachusetts.¹³⁰ Charles Sumner, in his famous reply to Senator Butler of South Carolina in the Senate of the United States in 1853, expressed the same opinion, although he acknowledged that slavery in some form had existed there.¹³¹

The mother country personally interfered concerning the treatment of the slaves. In 1688, Governor Andros, of Massachusetts, by royal instructions, was ordered to have a law passed forbidding the inhuman treatment of slaves by owners or overseers, wherein provision should be made that the "willful killing of Negroes and Indians be punished with death, and a fit penalty imposed for the maiming of them."¹³² But the Mosaic Code in force in Massachusetts, already provided for such. Yet it is interesting to note that such action from the mother country would not have occurred, unless circumstances justified such interference. News of the burning at the stake in Roxbury in 1681 of two Negroes who had been committed and sentenced for arson no doubt impelled this order.¹³³ Then, again, it must

¹²⁸ Moore, *Notes*, p. 18.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁰ See Palfrey, *History of New England*, II, 30 (note).

¹³¹ "Sir, slavery never flourished in Massachusetts, nor did it ever prevail there at any time even in colonial days. . . . In all her annals no person was ever born a slave on the soil of Massachusetts."

¹³² See *New York Colonial Documents*, III, 547.

¹³³ Moore, *Notes*, p. 103.

be borne in mind that Massachusetts had gained an unsavory reputation in England because of her independent proclivities.¹³⁴

Laws governing the actions of the slaves followed rapidly. One prohibited in 1698 the bartering or trading with slaves under the penalty of being whipped at the stake. A law of 1703 prohibited the manumission, discharge, or setting free of "Negro or Mulatto Slaves." Security had to be given by the master that such emancipated slaves would not become a public charge. It had become a frequent and evil practice for owners to liberate infirm or aged slaves, thus making it incumbent upon the towns to support their worn out chattel. This law aimed to correct this habit and really operated in interest of the slave, for it compelled the master to support him in his old age. It remained in force until 1801, was reenacted, and continued in force until about the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Again in 1703 a law was passed, prohibiting the presence of "Negroes, Mulattoes and Indians" on the streets after nine o'clock, without a certificate from the owner, or some other influential white man. Violations were punished by whipping. Such persons might be apprehended by anyone and turned over to the constable.¹³⁵ A more severe law of 1705, punished with whipping "any Negro or Molatto" who should strike a Christian."¹³⁶ Later in the year the General Court, alarmed at the rapid increase of Mulattoes in the colony, forbade miscegenation by selling out of the Province all Negroes found guilty of such improper intercourse.

Connecticut's slave code embodied harsher measures than that of its sister colony to the north. Early in 1660, perhaps inspired by the fear of Negro and Indian insurrection, the legislature decreed that no "Negro or Indian be required to watch train or ward in this colonie." In the

¹³⁴ See Channing, *History of the United States*, Vol. II, p. 65-70.

¹³⁵ Moore, *Notes*, p. 52, 53, 54, 55.

¹³⁶ Hurd, *Law of Freedom and Bondage*, II, 270.

previous year in order to curb the practice of kidnapping slaves, manstealing had been labelled a capital crime. But Connecticut's Black Code properly begins in 1690, when a law was passed prohibiting the wanderings of "Indians, Negroes, and Molattoes" outside the limits of the towns where they belonged. Upon apprehension and return to their masters, the latter must pay the costs. This did not apply to either of the above named persons in case he possessed a permit from his master, an assistant, or a justice of the peace. The law also provided that any ferryman transporting a slave without a pass, should be fined twenty shillings.¹³⁷ A free Negro under the above law must pay the costs, if brought before a magistrate. Both of these laws were repealed in 1797. A law passed in 1708, provided whipping as a penalty for any Negro offering to strike a white man.¹³⁸

A more severe law enacted in 1703 prohibited any "licensed inkeeper, victualler, taverner, or retailer of strong drink, from entertaining either the sons or slaves, parents or masters," without a special order from such parents or masters.¹³⁹ This law was passed to restrain the frequent and boisterous carousings of young people, slave and free alike.

Masters complained of the theft of their property by their slaves, who bartered or sold such to unscrupulous whites. To prevent this practice, the General Court, in 1708, provided that any person receiving property from a slave, without orders from the master, should not only return the property, but double its value in addition; and if the property were not recovered, treble the value. Upon refusal he was to be whipped with not over twenty stripes.

¹³⁷ Hurd., *op. cit.*, II, 270.

¹³⁸ Steiner. *History of Slavery in Connecticut*, p. 12. Some of the Connecticut laws were copied from Massachusetts.

¹³⁹ *Conn. Col. Rec.*, IV, p. 438.

Slaves violating this act were to receive thirty stripes, whether the goods were recovered or not.¹⁴⁰

Evidently, here as in Massachusetts, it had become habitual for some masters to evade the responsibility of maintaining old and infirm slaves by manumitting them, and thus leaving them a public charge. To offset this, a law was promulgated in 1702, decreeing that indigent slaves, who had been emancipated, should be supported by their former masters.¹⁴¹ This was a purely economic measure and was impelled, no doubt, as much by the inability of the towns to care for such persons as by humanitarian consideration for these worn out chattel. However, the law must have been evaded, for in 1771, the General Court saw fit to supplement the enactment by providing that if the owners or their representatives failed to support such former slaves, the selectment of the town should do so and sue the offenders for the expenses incurred.¹⁴²

In 1723, a law was passed forbidding the presence on the street of any slave after nine o'clock at night without a pass either from his master or mistress.¹⁴³ Any one might apprehend him and bring him before a Justice of the Peace. If guilty, he should receive not over ten stripes, unless the master paid ten shillings to release him. This amount was later changed to \$1.67. If anyone received such a slave in his home, he should pay upon conviction, the same fine, one-half of which was to go to the state, the other half to the informer.¹⁴⁴ But one of the most severe acts in Connecticut's slave code, was a law of 1730, which provided that any slave uttering words as would be actionable in a free person, should receive not over forty lashes, and to be sold for the costs, if the master were unwilling to pay

¹⁴⁰ *Conn. Col. Rec.*, V, p. 52; see also Steiner, *History of Slavery in Connecticut*, p. 14.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 375-376.

¹⁴² Steiner, *History of Slavery in Connecticut*, p. 14.

¹⁴³ *Conn. Col. Rec.*, VI, p. 390. This law was passed by the fear of a possible Negro and Indian insurrection.

¹⁴⁴ *Conn. Col. Rec.*, VI, 391.

the fine. However, it is of interest to note that the slave could offer the same testimony and make the same pleas in his behalf as his master.¹⁴⁵ Few more laws were enacted during the remainder of the colonial period, because of the French Wars and the impending American Revolution.

Stringent as was the Connecticut Slave Code, the legislative pronouncements of Rhode Island in restraint of the slave were even more rigid. This was due primarily to the supplementary by-laws of the Narragansett Community, evoked by the large number of Negroes in that section.¹⁴⁶ In addition to the laws already cited for Massachusetts and Connecticut, Rhode Island forbade the meetings of Indians and Negroes in the streets at any time, prohibited any housekeeper to entertain a Negro or Indian slave, without the consent of the owner, and also forbade any housekeeper to allow any slave, or servant to have any dancing, gambling or diversion of any kind, on penalty of fifty pounds or imprisonment of one month. If the host was a free Negro or Indian, "he, she, or they should no longer be suffered to keep house, but should be dispossessed of his or their house and put into some private family to work for his or her living for the space of one whole year, the wages accruing for said service to be used for the benefit of the town."¹⁴⁷

But even these harsh measures failed to satisfy the South Kingstown planters, who added a supplementary provision in 1726 that if any Negro slave be found at the home of a free Negro, both should be whipped. A Negro convicted of theft—slave or free—should be whipped or banished, if convicted by two justices of the peace. Not even cider could be sold to a slave in Rhode Island.¹⁴⁸ The South Kingstown planters even went so far in their legislation against theft as to deny to Negroes the right of own-

¹⁴⁵ *Conn. Col. Rec.*, VII, p. 290.

¹⁴⁶ Channing, *Narragansett Planters*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

ing any property in horses, sheep or any other "stock creatures."¹⁴⁹ These measures are a fitting commentary upon the fear of the planters who lived among a group of malcontents—Indians and Negroes. After all, not such a wide abyss existed between slave legislation in Colonial New England and in the more familiar black codes of the sugar, tobacco and cotton States.

New Hampshire's Slave Code was substantially the same as that of Massachusetts, but slavery in both Vermont and New Hampshire, at no time attained the proportions that it reached in other parts of New England. Neither state had many slaves.

THE AWAKENING

We have seen slavery of both Indians and Negroes and especially of the latter firmly rooted in the New England colonies and that around it had grown up an elaborate system of laws, tending to regulate the actions of these people, imposing upon them discriminatory penalties for their offenses; and in some cases, virtually crushing them by their harshness. We have seen the institution of slavery defended by the Puritans and their issue, as founded upon the Sacred Word of God. We have seen that even the clergy deemed it morally right to hold property in slaves. Even that most devout churchman, Cotton Mather, owned a Negro slave named Spaniard.¹⁵⁰ Ezra Stiles, later President of Yale College, considered it a privilege, to send a barrel of rum to Africa in exchange for a slave.¹⁵¹ To the credit of New England, however, may it be said, that as early as the Seventeenth Century there lived good and devout men, whose hearts beat with a warm feeling of

¹⁴⁹ See Channing, *Narragansett Planters*, for these laws, p. 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ Weeden, *Economic and Social History of New England*, p. 450.

¹⁵¹ Stiles thought it a great privilege for the "poor Negroes to be taken from the ignorant and wicked people of Guiana and be placed in a Christian land where they can become good Christians and go to heaven when they die." Even John Davenport and Edward Hopkins held slaves.—*Journal of Negro History*, I, 79.

pity and sympathy at the sight of this degraded and abject condition of their fellow men. Their arguments, based upon consideration for the moral and spiritual welfare of the slaves endured until the beginning of the revolutionary era about 1760. From that date on, slavery was opposed as a violation of the natural rights of man.

Paradoxical, as it may seem, Rhode Island, which became the greatest slave-trading colony in America, was the first to employ legislative procedure to stamp out involuntary servitude. In 1652, the General Court of Election, held at Warwick, on May 18, passed on the second day of its session this resolution, "Whereas, there is common course practiced among Englishmen to buy Negroes (Negroes) . . . for service as slaves forever; for the preventing of such practices among us, let it be ordered that no black mankind or white being forced by covenant, bond or otherwise, to serve any man or assignes longer than ten years, or until they come to be twentie-four years of age, if they be taken in under fourteen." The act provided that at the expiration of ten years such slaves or servants should be emancipated and "that any one violating this statute, either by refusal to free such persons or by selling them elsewhere, shall forfeit to the Collonie £40."¹⁵²

No doubt there can be traced in this act the liberalizing influence of Roger Williams. This was also furthered by the paucity of slaves in the towns situated at the head of Narragansett Bay. Yet it would have applied only to Providence of Warwick in its execution.¹⁵³

This act—despite the noble grandeur of its sentiments as judged by Seventeenth Century standards—was not enforced, even in the towns over which the jurisdiction of the Commissioners extended.¹⁵⁴ It was not repealed, however, but was soon rendered innocuous by the conservative sentiment which crystalized against it as the number of slaves

¹⁵² *Rhode Island Colonial Records*, I, 248.

¹⁵³ Hurd, *Law of Freedom and Bondage*, I, 275, note.

¹⁵⁴ Dubois, *Suppression of Slave Trade*, p. 34.

increased.¹⁵⁵ However, it has been styled the first legislative attempt in America, if not in the world, to abolish involuntary servitude.¹⁵⁶

Down to the revolutionary era, however, opposition to slavery manifested itself only in spasmodic utterances by a few high-souled and humanely sympathetic men¹⁵⁷ who were primarily interested in the salvation of the souls of the bondmen. Others spoke out against the system for economic reasons, but they were a small minority. In 1700, Judge Sewall published his *Selling of Joseph*, a conscientious plea for the liberation of the slaves in Massachusetts. "Liberty," said Sewall, "is valued next to life, none should part with it themselves or deprive others of it, but upon most mature consideration." His prophetic insight foresaw the doom of any society built upon slave labor. The doctrine of equality was preached by this magistrate long before Jefferson incorporated it into the Declaration of Independence. Sewall asserted that "All men are sons of Adam, are his co-heirs, and have equal Right unto Liberty and all the outward Comforts of Life." He sought to convince his countrymen that slavery was a political, economic and moral evil. Negroes, he argued, could not become citizens, were of an alien race, could not be amalgamated, and therefore did not tend to increase the body politic. Furthermore, they were not allowed to train, hence contributed nothing to the defense of the colony.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, he contended that slave labor was economically unsound, for one free white laborer could accomplish more than the work of two slaves. Masters, he charged, connived at illicit social relations between their slaves, and destroyed the union of the family of slaves according to their whimsical pleasure, thereby abetting the degeneration of morals.

¹⁵⁵ Johnston, *Slave Trade in Rhode Island*, *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections*, II, 126, 127.

¹⁵⁶ Moore, *Notes*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁷ Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁸ *Diary of Cotton Mather*, p. 687.

¹⁵⁹ Sewall's "*Selling of Joseph*," cited in Moore's *Notes*, p. 83-7.

Despite the lofty sentiments which inspired Sewall's protest against slavery, his pleading fell upon deaf ears, "like the voice of one crying in the wilderness." It was too much to ask of the merchants, who were growing rich through the commerce in human souls, to abstain from such a profitable trade.¹⁶⁰

Still undeterred by his failure in 1700, and also undismayed by the sharp retort of Judge Saffin, who took issue against his plea for the emancipation of the slaves, Judge Sewall, republished a tract against the importation of Negro slaves which appeared in the Boston News Letter, June 10, 1706. It was entitled *An Essay or Computation that the Importation of Negroes is not so profitable as that of White Servants*. Its arguments were chiefly intended to show that slavery was economically unsound. Most of the arguments in the *Selling of Joseph* were reiterated, but were reinforced by an effort to show that slave mortality alone rendered such a practice unprofitable. He asserted that forty-four slaves had died during the past winter in Boston alone, a loss of £1,320 at £30 per head. In addition, he asserted, "Negro slaves are eye servants; they are lazy, thievish, and great liars." He urged the importation of indentured servants. Anyone, he suggested, might be able to pay eight or ten pounds for a servant, and yet be unwilling or unable to pay thirty pounds for a slave. The children of slaves, he contended, did not increase the body politic; the offspring of indentured servants would. If a servant died, the master would lose only eight or ten pounds; whereas the death of a slave would despoil him of thrice that sum. In order to protect the servants from unscrupulous masters, he suggested that a law be passed that if any servant should be sold out of the province during the time of his service, it would cost the person buying him three pounds, which sum would be paid into the treasury.

Later, Sewall wrote Henry Newman, saying there could

¹⁶⁰ Moore, *Notes*, p. 94; This was the case in all the New England Colonies until the American Revolution.

be no "thorough and sincere dissemination of the Gospel until slavery was abolished."¹⁶¹ Sewall was almost a half century in advance of his time, and his generation rewarded his efforts with more "frowns and hard words than sympathy."¹⁶² Though he, himself, had a Negro slave, Scipio, the latter received wages and at one time accumulated fifty pounds, which Sewall deposited for him at five per cent interest.¹⁶³ Sewall's ideas, however, were more philosophical than practical.¹⁶⁴

In 1737, another tract made its appearance. It was entitled, *A Testimony against that anti-Christian Practice of Making Slaves of Men. . . .*¹⁶⁵ This article was the work of Elihu Coleman of Nantucket, a minister of the Society of Friends. He appealed to man's sense of justice and upheld the Golden Rule. He earnestly urged that the colonists "do toward the slaves as they themselves would be done by."¹⁶⁶

The opening of the struggle with Great Britain put another weapon into the hands of the enemies of slavery. This was the natural rights theory promulgated by John Locke at the time of the accession of William and Mary in 1688. Although the philosophies of Montesquieu, Beccaria, and Cokes's Commentaries on the common law influenced the colonists, their political theory was epitomized by Locke's statement that "Men [are] by nature all free, equal and independent."¹⁶⁷ If applied to the colonists' struggle for freedom it applied equally to the slaves, and this doctrine was made the basis of an argument against the system.

Chief among the advocates of natural liberty was James Otis. In his great speech on "Writs of Assistance" in 1761,

¹⁶¹ Cited in Moore's *Notes*, 106-108.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 108-9.

¹⁶³ Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America*, p. 19.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 107-8.

¹⁶⁶ Macy's *Nantucket*, p. 281.

¹⁶⁷ Locke, John, *Two Treatises of Government*, Book II.

he urged in no uncertain terms the immediate liberation of the slaves. "The colonists are by the law of nature free born as indeed all men are white or black. No better reason can be given for enslaving those of any color than such as baron Montesquieu has humorously given as the foundation of that cruel slavery exercised over the poor Ethiopians which threatens one day to reduce both Europe and America to the ignorance and barbarity of the darkest ages. Does it follow that it is right to enslave a men because he is black? Will short curled hair like wool instead of Christian hair, as it is called by those whose hearts are as hard as the nether millstone, help the argument? Can any logical inference in favor of slavery be drawn from a flat nose, a long or short face?"¹⁶⁸

John Adams, who cherished the idea of gradual emancipation, shuddered at the extremist doctrine of Otis.¹⁶⁹ This was the beginning of the colonial strife with Great Britain, and it was fitting that such a spokesman as Otis, while demanding liberty for himself and his constituents, should also seek freedom for the slaves. Nathaniel Appleton, later a member of the first Committee of Correspondence, and a zealous patriot during the Revolution, took the most uncompromising stand against slavery.¹⁷⁰ In 1767, he published an anonymous tract of twenty octavo pages entitled *Considerations on Slavery*. Baxter, the son of a Cambridge pastor, not only believed that the Negro should be "treated with a Respect agreeable, but like Garrison, almost a century later, advocated the liberation of the slaves regardless of the consequences. He ridiculed the nice puritanic distinctions as between "bought" and "stolen" slaves. The buyer, he asserted, "is as guilty as the man-stealer." Like Sewall, he saw the economic and political loss to the colony by virtue of its holding in bondage a people who could neither increase nor defend the body

¹⁶⁸ James Otis, *Rights of the Colonists Asserted and Proved*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁹ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collection*, III, 490.

¹⁷⁰ Appleton, *Memorial*, 26.

politic, and whose economic value was diminished by "continual aspiring after their forbidden Liberty."¹⁷¹ The Reverend Samuel Webster and James Swan, a Scotchman, published circulars against the "evil practice of enslaving Negroes and Molattoes."¹⁷²

Later the towns took up the cudgels against slavery. As early as 1701, Boston had instructed its representatives to use their endeavors to bring about a cessation of the slave trade.¹⁷³ Undoubtedly, Sewall's article of 1700 inspired this action. Nothing came of it, however. In 1716, the Quakers, at their monthly meeting in Nantucket, agreed that it was "inconsistent with truth for Friends to purchase slaves and hold them for life."¹⁷⁴ In 1755, the town of Salem authorized a petition to the General Court against the importation of Negroes.¹⁷⁵ The Town of Worcester followed the same action in 1765, by informing their representative to use his influence in obtaining a law "to put an end to that unchristian and impolitic practice of making slaves of the human species, and that he give his vote for none to serve in his Majesty's Council, who will use their influence against such a law."¹⁷⁶ Boston, which at that time, contained almost as many slaves as the rest of Massachusetts combined, instructed its representatives in 1766, to vote for the total abolition of slavery "among us and to move for a law to prohibit the importation and the purchasing of slaves for the future."¹⁷⁷ Some of the smaller towns even voted to have no slaves at all, and to indemnify all masters, who should voluntarily manumit their slaves, for any expense that might arise through the age of infirmities, or inability of such former slaves to support them-

¹⁷¹ Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America*, p. 20.

¹⁷² Moore, *Notes*, 125.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 107-8.

¹⁷⁴ Macy's *Nantucket*.

¹⁷⁵ Felt's *Salem*; Moore, *Notes*, 109.

¹⁷⁶ *Boston News Letter*, June 5, 1765; See also Moore's *Notes*, p. 124.

¹⁷⁷ Drake, *Boston*, p. 728-9.

selves.¹⁷⁸ But a far more drastic action was proposed by the town of Sandwich on May 18, 1773. Their representative was instructed to "endeavor to have an act passed by the Court to prevent the importation of slaves, and to provide for the liberation of all children that shall be born of such Africans as are now slaves, who shall be set free at twenty-one years of age."¹⁷⁹ This resolution, had it been enacted into a law, would have abolished, once for all, the slave trade in Massachusetts, and also provided for the gradual emancipation of the slaves.¹⁸⁰ But this resolution, like so many others, fell upon deaf ears.

It is clear from the above that the changing attitude toward slavery in Massachusetts began about 1761, just at the time when the opening gun was fired in what was to culminate in the final separation of the American Colonies from Great Britain.¹⁸¹ As the constitutional struggle between the mother country and the colonies increased in intensity, the opposition to slavery grew stronger, because the patriots were brought face to face with their own inconsistency in selfishly demanding liberty, while depriving other human beings of theirs.

The colonial arguments for liberty were not lost upon the slaves, for, using the identical weapons of their masters, they petitioned the legislature for their freedom. The "rights of man" theory had attracted the attention of the Negroes, and the more intelligent disseminated it among their fellows.¹⁸² On June 25, 1773, a petition was read in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. It was signed by Felix Holbrook and other Negroes, praying to be liberated from a "State of Bondage, and made Freemen of this Community, and that this Court should give and grant to them some part of the unimproved Lands, belonging to

¹⁷⁸ Moore, *Notes*, p. 125.

¹⁷⁹ Freeman's *History of Cape Cod*, II, 174; Moore, *Notes*, p. 134.

¹⁸⁰ Moore, *Notes*, p. 109.

¹⁸¹ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, V Series, iii, 390.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, V Series, iii, 302.

the Province for a settlement, or relieve them in such other way as shall seem good and wise upon the whole.”¹⁸³ Nothing came of the matter, however, for the legislature was not so far advanced in its opinions upon slavery as some individual towns.

The Negroes of Bristol and Worcester petitioned the Committee of Correspondence for their freedom, and in a meeting, held at Worcester it was resolved “that the enslavement of any part of the human race is abhorrent to us us, and that whenever a door shall be opened, or opportunity be present for anything to be done towards emancipation of the Negroes, we shall use every endeavor to obtain such.”¹⁸⁴ But nine years more were destined to pass before the judicial construction of the Massachusetts State Constitution was to effect the liberation of the slaves.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Legislative action and sentiment was not as far advanced as the position taken by individuals or some of the towns at any time during the colonial era. In 1705, the Massachusetts General Court laid an impost of five pounds a head upon every Negro imported into the colony.¹⁸⁵ Some historians have construed this action as an attempt by Massachusetts, at that early date, to discourage slave importations. However, it seems that such a duty was more of a revenue measure than a prohibitive enactment. At least, it had no effect upon the slave trade, which continued to flourish until after the American Revolution.

The first legislative attempt to abolish the slave trade in Massachusetts occurred in 1767. On March 13, of that year, due perhaps to the instructions given its representatives by the town of Boston, a bill was introduced into the House of Representatives “to prevent the unwarrantable and unusual Practice or Custom of enslaving Mankind in

¹⁸³ Moore, *Notes*, 135.

¹⁸⁴ Lincoln, *History of Worcester*, 10.

¹⁸⁵ Moore, *Notes*, p. 145.

this Province and the Importation of Slaves into the same.” This bill, if enacted into a law, would have ended, at one deft stroke, both slavery and the slave trade. But the legislature dilly-dallied, and the bill was finally lost.¹⁸⁶ In 1771, another bill was introduced, purporting to effect a discontinuation of slavery in Massachusetts.¹⁸⁷ But, though passed by both houses, Governor Hutchinson withheld his assent, despite the valliant efforts of James Otis to secure its passage. Hutchinson evidently feared that even if the law passed, it would have been disallowed by Parliament. He asserted that “the Bills which prohibited the importation of Negro Slaves appeared to me to come within his Majesty’s Instructions to Sir Francis Bernard, which restrains the Governor from assenting to any Laws of a new and unusual manner.” Hutchinson also entertained doubts as to whether moral antagonism to slavery or the desire to strike at England, was the underlying motive of this bill.¹⁸⁸

However, so glaring had become the evil of human bondage, that a sustained and sincere agitation was kept up for its abolition. In 1773, came a series of resolves from the towns of Leicester, Salem, and Milford, enjoining their representatives to use “every endeavor to have a heavy duty laid on every Negro imported or brought in from Africa, or elsewhere into this province, or by making a law that every Negro, so imported, shall be a free man as soon as he comes within its jurisdiction.”¹⁸⁹ Supplementing this resolve was the petition from the Negroes of June 10, 1773.¹⁹⁰ As a result of this petition, a bill was introduced in January, 1774 “to prevent the importation of slaves into this colony and the laying of a penalty of £50 upon the offender

¹⁸⁶ Bradford, *History of Massachusetts*, p. 94.

¹⁸⁷ Moore, *Notes*, 127-8.

¹⁸⁸ Massachusetts Archives, p. 159-60; The British Parliament reserved the right to declare all colonial enactments which were constructed to be in conflict with imperial legislation.

¹⁸⁹ Washburn, *Leicester*, p. 442; Moore, *Notes*, 134.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

for every Negro thus brought in. The purchaser of such a Negro should likewise be fined £50 for each Negro acquired.¹⁹¹

It must not be supposed that this bill aimed to crush the institution of slavery. Far from it, for anyone might bring his slave into the colony, providing his tarrying there did not exceed the twelve month. The bill passed both houses, but failed to obtain the Governor's assent. It would no doubt, have been disallowed by the British Parliament even had he signed it for the Negro traffic was considered the chief and fundamental support of the British Colonies in America. The Earl of Dartmouth in reference to this trade, said in 1775 "we cannot allow the colonies to check or discourage in any manner, a trade so beneficial to the Nation."¹⁹² As public sentiment against slavery was farthest advanced in Massachusetts at this time it has been treated in more detail. Yet, paradoxically enough, actual legislative enactments against slavery found precedence in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Anti-slavery legislation in Rhode Island began in 1652, but, as has been pointed out, the law was flagrantly disobeyed, and Rhode Island became the greatest slave trading colony in New England. In 1708, an attempt was made to destroy the slave trade in Rhode Island¹⁹³ by levying a prohibitive impost of three pounds upon every Negro imported into the colony. However, the King disallowed this duty.

The foremost opponents of slavery in Rhode Island, however, were the Quakers, and the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel."¹⁹⁴ The religious tenets of the Quakers swept them beyond the position taken by the Puritans upon slavery. George Fox, as early as 1671, had lifted up his voice against slavery but like John Adams a cen-

¹⁹¹ Moore, *Notes*, 138.

¹⁹² Moore, *Notes*, 138.

¹⁹³ Dubois, *Suppression of Slave Trade*, 34.

¹⁹⁴ Bucknell, *History of Rhode Island*, II, 508.

tury later, he advocated gradual emancipation.¹⁹⁵ In 1717, the Quakers advised the "Friends" against sending slaves to be sold anywhere. In 1727, the "Friends" went still further and declared a ban upon slave importations.¹⁹⁶ Tom Hazard of South Kingstown, was one of the first to feel the pricks of conscience and to emancipate his slaves; Jeremiah Austen did the same. John Woolman, a Quaker of New Jersey, preached eloquently against slavery in Rhode Island from 1747 to 1760. In 1773, the Quakers boldly declared that all slaves of "Friends" should be set free. Refusal was to be punished by dismissal from the Quaker Society. So courageous was the position adopted by these people upon the slave issue, that they even dismissed Governor Hopkins from the Society, which culminated in his losing the governorship. Moses Brown, his friend, having freed his slaves in preparation, superseded him.¹⁹⁷ In 1774, the "Committee of Seven," at its yearly meeting in Newport, resolved to use every influence to bring about a cessation of the slave trade and also to effect the abolition of slavery.¹⁹⁸

The legislature passed a law in 1757, imposing a penalty of five hundred pounds upon any person kidnapping slaves out of the province. But this legislation was in the interest of the slave holder. In 1774, due to the pressure of the Quakers and the "Society for the propagation of the Gospel," and also as an economic thrust at England, Rhode Island passed a bill prohibiting the slave trade. This enactment declared that any Negro brought into the colony should be set free immediately upon landing. It did not purpose to end slavery, for any person from an adjoining province might bring his slave into the colony, provided that his stay there, as in Massachusetts, did not exceed one year. Anyone bringing a slave from Africa or the West

¹⁹⁵ Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁶ Updike, *History of the Narragansett Church*, 176.

¹⁹⁷ Bucknell's *History of Rhode Island*, Vol. II, 508.

¹⁹⁸ Rhode Island Collection Record, VII, 64.

Indies was required to post a bond of one hundred pounds to export him within a year. Violations of this law imposed a penalty of one hundred pounds.¹⁹⁹ Well-intentioned as this was, it availed little against the avarice of the Rhode Island slave merchants, and it was not until long after the Federal Government in 1818 had declared the slave trade "piracy," and Rhode Island Sea Captains had paid the extreme penalty, did the merchants of that community finally renounce this profitable cruel practice.²⁰⁰

Connecticut, famed for its conservatism throughout the colonial period, exhibited this same tendency in regard to slavery within its borders. Very little is known concerning the anti-slavery movement in this colony during colonial times. Still it is patent that toward the revolutionary era, the reasonableness and the justice of holding Negroes in bondage began to be questioned. Some even released their slaves outright. One man in Norwich, not only manumitted his three slaves, but as a compensation for their services leased them a valuable farm on exceedingly reasonable terms.²⁰¹ Just before the actual outbreak of hostilities the clergy, led by Ezra Stiles, Dr. Jonathan Edwards and Levi Hart, raised their voices in behalf of the liberation of the slaves.²⁰² Their sentiments quickly took root and soon the newspapers carried anti-slavery appeals of more than lukewarm sentiments.²⁰³ Such an article appeared in *The Norwich Packet*, July 7, 1774. It was addressed to the Sons of Liberty in America, and in unequivocal terms it thundered against the inconsistency of pleading for liberty, while holding an alien people in bondage. The author saw in the impending conflict between the mother country and the colonies, a just punishment for their (the colonists') sins. "Thou that teachest another," it

¹⁹⁹ *Rhode Island Collection Record*, VII, 252.

²⁰⁰ Bucknell, *History of Rhode Island*, 510.

²⁰¹ Steiner, *History of Slavery in Connecticut*, 22.

²⁰² Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America*, 41.

²⁰³ Caulkins, *History of Norwich*, 329; see also Steiner, *History*, 22.

went on, "teachest not thou thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Yes, verily we do. A black cloud witnesseth against us, and our own mouths condemn us. . . . Can we expect to be free, so long as we are determined to enslave?" The writer signed himself (Honesty).

The Resolves of the Danbury Town Meeting of December 12, 1774, stigmatized slavery as "one of the crying sins of our land," and hoped that "something further might be done for the relief of such as are now in a state of slavery in the colony, and such as may hereafter be born of parents in that unhappy condition."²⁰⁴

Although the growth of liberal ideas is clearly depicted by the foregoing resolutions, what was to be the chief factor in the abolition of the slave trade in Connecticut was the economic motive. Slaves reached their high-water mark in Connecticut in 1774, when six thousand five hundred and sixty-two were counted, comprising nearly one twentieth of the total population of the colony. This was an economic burden upon free white laborers, who saw prospective employment precluded by slave labor. Therefore, Connecticut in order to relieve this condition and also to cripple England's trade, took steps to throttle the source of this black labor supply, and in October, 1774, the legislature passed a law providing that "No Indian, Negro or Mulatto, slave shall at any time hereafter be brought into this state by sea or land, from any place or places whatsoever, to be disposed of, left or sold within this State."²⁰⁵ A penalty of one hundred pounds was imposed for each violation of this act. Later the sum was placed at three hundred and thirty-four dollars.²⁰⁶

The foregoing is a brief résumé of slavery in New England during the colonial period, and a summary of the movement to abolish this practice down to the actual outbreak

²⁰⁴ Steiner, *History*, etc., 30.

²⁰⁵ *Connecticut Col. Record*, XIV, 329.

²⁰⁶ Steiner, *History*, etc., 16.

of the Revolution. At this time agitation against slavery was general in all of the colonies, but only Rhode Island and Connecticut by abolishing the slave trade had made any definite movement to get rid of the institution. Actual emancipation had to wait until after the colonies had become independent states.

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